**VORTEX**

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**EDITORIAL**

**I'M PRETTY** sure that most people who have a long-term connection with Big Finish will know the name of Paul Spragg. For those who don't know, Paul was the editor of *Vortex*, Nick Briggs' podcast co-host, and did just about everything else behind the scenes, in the Big Finish office, in studio, and at home. Sadly, he passed away suddenly, just over two-and-a-half years ago.

Paul was someone I spoke to a lot on the phone, with regards to volume two of the Big Finish Companion, and often about *Vortex* back in the days when I contributed the Listen Again column. I only ever met him once, back in February 2012, and he was just as charming as he came across in the podcasts.

He was kind, humble, and absolutely hilarious. We'd often swap emails and, as fellow journalists, we both liked a good pun for headlines. We'd try and out do each other, and time and again, no matter what I came up with as a suggested heading, he'd always manage to trump me. I'd concede defeat, time and again, and Paul was always gracious in accepting my congratulations  on winning our unofficial competition.

This month marks something special – the release of the first Paul Spragg Memorial Short Trip (see page 13). Paul was always someone who was so encouraging, and it's so appropriate that the event is being run in his name, to give untried writers the chance to try and impress, and have their work turned into an audio reading. The first winner, *Forever Fallen*, will be available exclusively as a download from December 29, the date of Paul's birthday.

Paul's passing left a huge hole in our lives, and the loss we felt, as members of the extended Big Finish family, is nothing compared to those of his family, his beloved partner Natalie, and his close friends and colleagues, but this writing opportunity will ensure he will never be forgotten.

This festive season, I raise a glass to you, Paul.

KENNY

SNEAK PREVIEWS AND WHISPERS

**THE OMEGA FACTOR**

**THE SCARES** are returning in March 2017, with the release of the second series of **The Omega Factor**.Louise Jameson and John Dorney are back in Department 7 as Dr Anne Reynolds and Adam Crane, for the next run of the award-nominated series.

Producer David Richardson says: "We'd always known where we were going to take **The Omega Factor**, and in fact some of the developments in series two were first discussed when we were planning series one. But we decided to hold back – to use the first box set to establish the format and characters, and then step up a gear in the second set.

"I was really pleased by how people reacted to series one. It seemed that everyone who heard it loved it, and that began a lovely word of mouth that spread through social media and brought in other people. And the fact that *The Old Gods* by Phil Mulryne was nominated in the BBC Audio Awards helped too – ensuring that **The Omega Factor** has a great future with Big Finish.

"It was lovely that when we started recording, Natasha Gerson arrived at the studio full of praise for the scripts. She said that her father, who created the series, would have absolutely loved them. There's no greater accolade – and I have every intention that the audio series of **The Omega Factor** will outlast its TV counterpart!"

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Kenny Smith prepares for launch as he finds out more about the new audio series which will…

**DARE TO BE DIFFERENT**

**DAN DARE** – a British hero to so many different generations of British comic lovers. For Big Finish fans outside the United Kingdom, he's got the same kind of status as Buck Rogers or Flash Gordon.

*Dan Dare, Pilot Of The Future*, was created for the *Eagle* comic by artist Frank Hampson and his editor, the Reverend Marcus Morris. He appeared in the *Eagle* from 1950 to 1967 (and subsequently in reprints); and was given his first audio outings, seven times a week, on Radio Luxembourg between 1951–1956.

But you can't keep a good man down, and even after the *Eagle* stopped printing, Dan Dare returned in new incarnations to suit new generations: in the 1970s in the British weekly, *2000AD*; in the 1980s in the relaunched *Eagle* comic; in the 2000s as an animated series; and as a film project in the works in 2016.

But now, at the end of 2016, Dan Dare is back in audio form from B7 Media, with the project spearheaded by producer/director Andrew Mark Sewell.

What is it about Dan that he thinks has made the character endure? He admits: "Space is cool. I think, in part what contributes to Dan Dare's enduring appeal is that everyone is ultimately drawn to heroes — both real and fictional. Just look at how the British astronaut Tim Peake has reignited everyone's interest in space exploration.

"When Dan Dare was first conceived by the Rev. Marcus Morris and Frank Hampson back in the 1950s it was at a time of post war austerity, when the victory over the Nazis was tempered by continued rationing, the Red threat, fear of imminent nuclear Armageddon and the decline of the British Empire. The nation was in need of a new kind of hero that embraced a bold, more optimistic future. Dan Dare served that need — a bright ray of hope and optimism, enthusiastically looking towards a brave new world beyond the stars.

"Dare was also fiercely moral, honourable and heroic; all great attributes to entice your audience/readership in an uncertain world. In many ways, amidst the global turmoil that now besets us, we are once more in need of a heroic figure to help us feel more positive about the future. The beliefs, values and hope that Dan Dare represents are as relevant today as they were back in the 1950s."

The new audio adventures blast off this month, with Ed Stoppard as Dan Dare, Geoff McGivern as Digby, Heida Reed as Professor Peabody, and Raad Rawi as the Mekon.

The first volume features three stories, *Voyage to Venus* written by Richard Kurti and Bev Doyle, *The Red Moon Mystery* by James Swallow and *Marooned on Mercury* by Marc Platt, plus a disc of extras.

**FOR THOSE** unaware of the Dan Dare backstory, it's all there in *Voyage to Venus*, as test pilot Dan Dare is chosen to fly the Anastasia – a new experimental spacecraft – on its maiden voyage to Venus. However, on Venus, Dan, his sidekick Digby and Professor Peabody find a terrifyingly intelligent, cold-hearted ruler,   
the Mekon.

Andrew continues: "In many ways I think that Dan Dare is perfectly suited for audio. The success of the original Radio Luxembourg audio adventures is no accident. Given the elaborate and visionary universe that Dan Dare inhabits in terms of audio you're not limited by budgets, only your imagination to realise it.

"My association with Dan Dare began very early in my BBC career in 1990 when the much admired radio director Glyn Dearman was working on a new Dan Dare series for BBC Radio 4. We had met and discussed my being involved in the development of a promised second season, but alas the show wasn't recommissioned.

"My affinity with the character dates back to when my father introduced me to the *Eagle* and fuelled my imagination of worlds beyond our own. It seems almost poetic that decades later I find myself charged with realising Dan Dare for the 21st century."

Joining Andrew on the team is Patrick Chapman, who has been the project's development executive.

He says: "When the opportunity of new audio dramas with Dan Dare came up, the possibilities were exciting and we approached the project with great enthusiasm. He's one of those characters who come back, like the Doctor, or Sherlock Holmes, and it's up to each new generation to do its own version, whilst taking inspiration from what has gone before.

"We've kept the feeling of the original characters, staying true to their roots and the solar system they live in, whilst updating the tone for today's audience. We wanted to give fans of the original the heroes they love, but in a new, vibrant version, a big space adventure that's thrilling and strange and exciting.

"In terms of its technology and setting, we've brought it up to date. For instance, a lot has changed in the world of real-life space travel since 1950, and so the human tech in our series has moved on. The alien tech is still imaginatively speculative, as it was back then."

Lead writers Richard Kurti and Bev Doyle believe the 50s and 60s interest in space has been given a revival in recent years. They explain: "From Chris Hadfield's rendition of Space Oddity on the International Space Station, which clocked up 26 million hits on YouTube, to the 200,000 volunteers for a one-way ticket to Mars, people now see space exploration as something daring and romantic.

"Tim Peake's six-month mission for the European Space Agency, becoming the first Briton in space since Helen Sharman travelled on a Soviet spacecraft for eight days in 1991, and the first to do so under a British flag, has also captured many imaginations, inevitably prompting nostalgia for Britain's fictional hero, Dan Dare.

"The challenge for us was to strip away the stiff-upper-lip, old fashioned, class-ridden heroics, while retaining the courage, idealism and spirit of adventure that is at the heart of Dan Dare."

**WHILE B7** Media have produced the adventures, Big Finish are proud to be the distribution partners for the new Dan Dare series.

Big Finish chairman Jason Haigh-Ellery says: "My first introduction to Dan Dare was at the age of nine through the pages of the legendary comic *2000AD*.  He was the pilot of the future and artist Bellardinelli brought to life a whole new world that I was previously unaware of.

"Dan Dare quickly became one of my favourite comic strips and I missed the character terribly when his adventures came to an end after two years of fighting the Mekon and the Star Slayers. Now I have the chance to be a kid again – as B7 Media and Big Finish Productions bring to life one of the UK's greatest comic book heroes, but this time as full-cast audio productions."

Nicholas Briggs, executive producer at Big Finish, adds: "We're delighted to be releasing Dan Dare: Pilot of the Future on the Big Finish site. I've been a massive fan of Dan Dare for years. The way B7 have reinvented it is spot on.

"They've lovingly nurtured the spirit of the original to create something new and exciting that still manages to stay thoroughly faithful to all the beauty of the original. I would have loved to have played the Mekon, so, rather fittingly, I got to play an alien who really wanted to be the Mekon!"

Andrew adds: "With the world of film and television drama now seemingly dominated by American comic book heroes, Dan Dare has always stood out as the definitive British comic book space hero – a bright light of optimism that captured the hearts and imagination of a generation.

"The opportunity to realise Dan Dare for audio, and to partner once more with Big Finish, was an opportunity too great to turn down. Audio is unquestionably the perfect home to deliver truly epic Dan Dare audio adventures that are the embodiment its comic book inspiration."

**GETTING THE** tone and feel of Dan Dare right has been of utmost importance to Andrew. He reveals: "I'm an infuriating perfectionist and have a habit of constantly revisiting what I've done, thinking of ways in which we could improve what we've recorded.

"That said, these new audio adventures have come together brilliantly. For me the writers and cast have been pitch-perfect in capturing the characters and sense of derring-do adventure that for me epitomises the original Dan Dare comic strips. Combine that with the exemplary sound design work of Alistair Lock and Wilfredo Acosta and you really could believe you've taken a *Voyage to Venus*!

"I've have always been a great admirer of how George Lucas and Steven Spielberg so brilliantly channelled their love of the classic adventure serials of the 1930/40s and gave us a modern twist on the genre with Indiana Jones. For me our Dan Dare audio adventures are not dissimilar in tone. As is our trademark they're also unmistakably cinematic in style and I've often been heard to describe our Dan Dare dramatisation as Indiana Jones in Space."

Patrick agrees: "The original strip inspired our new series, and that was our intention from the beginning, but we also brought our own sensibility to it, B7's widescreen audio approach, creating movies in sound.

"Our audio adventures present the real Dare, as a 'pilot of the future' for our times as well as a hero with a rich history. So we respected the creation of Frank Hampson and Rev. Morris, but developed it with an attitude that speaks to contemporary listeners.

"Long-term fans as well as those new to Dare, will enjoy hearing these classic characters come alive in bold new adventures."

A second box set of Dan Dare adventures will follow in 2017 containing *Reign of the Robots* by Simon Guerrier, *Operation Saturn* by Patrick Chapman and *Prisoners of Space* by Colin Brake, along with another bonus disc.

Kenny Smith finds out what it takes to adapt two books, featuring two Doctors and six different companions…

**A NOVEL APPROACH**

**BIG FINISH** has successfully recreated Doctor Who from the 60s, the 70s, the 80s, and the 21st century, through a variety of releases over the years.

Of course, the show wasn't on screen in the 1990s (apart from May 27, 1996, with the Paul McGann TV Movie), but to keep the flame alive, Virgin Publishing released a series of original novels.

Over the past few years, Big Finish has adapted some of these books into full-cast audio productions.

This month brings two more popular novels to life, in the form of Seventh Doctor New Adventure *Original Sin*, and Missing Adventure *Cold Fusion*. Ever since Big Finish announced it would be producing more novel adaptations after the first release, *Love and War*, one of the most wanted stories has been Lance Parkin's classic *Cold Fusion*, which featured not only the Fifth Doctor, Adric, Nyssa and Tegan, but the Seventh Doctor, with his New Adventures companions Chris Cwej and Roz Forrester.

And now, Lance has turned back the clock to adapt his December 1996 work into a three-disc, six part audio play. He says: "As tends to be the way with me and Big Finish, I got an email out the blue. It's got the selling point that it's got two Doctors in it. My first reaction was that with two Doctors and five companions between them, that didn't leave any room for anyone else in the cast, so I replied with 'I'd love to do this, so how should I pare it down? The reply came back 'write the script, keep it as close to the book as you can, we'll figure it out'. And I did rationalise and elide some of the characters – there aren't 10 different Adjudicator lieutenants or whatever, there are two main ones, now – but it's basically the whole book.

"I literally took the original text file and erased everything that wasn't dialogue, then shaped it from that. I wrote it 20 years ago. I've picked up a few tricks in the meantime, and there are, looking back, so many scenes that start too early or end too late, lots of padding of dialogue. So I edited it down for timing reasons, tried to keep the scenes as short as possible. Then I needed to find ways to adapt or abandon a lot of the purely visual material, and dramatise or drop the inner monologue stuff. There are places where the story gets a little confused in the book – I'm not going to tell you where, but there were at least three points where characters suddenly know names or things the audience have found out, but they shouldn't have. There's a big alien machine in the story, and the book doesn't quite nail the sense of a growing crisis.

"This is a story about a young, naive Doctor meeting an old, manipulative one, and it's also what happened behind the scenes – I'm basically twice the age I was when I wrote the book, and adapting it was a good natured battle with a younger me, one where I'd think of a great line and turn the page and it turned out I'd thought of it in 1995, too. As with a lot of things I've written, I came back to *Cold Fusion* and it seemed to have been co-written by an idiot and a genius. The audio script is a tighter version of the story, one with a sort of digitally remastered plot structure. And, inevitably, instead of taking out the jokes, I've added more. John Dorney was script editor, and did a great job."

**ONE CHARACTER** in particular proved to be difficult when it came to adapting the novel to audio play form.

Lance reveals it was: "Patience. While the book (or audio) never quite say it, she's the Doctor's wife, Susan's grandmother. So a major character. And in the book, she basically spends the whole time unconscious or drowsy and ... well, it's not much of a part for an actress.

"So that's the big change: I wake her up a lot sooner, she ends up with quite a few of the Doctor's lines from the book. Her first line is a kind of awesome kiss to the past, even if I do say so myself.

"She's written as a sort of Sue Perkins-y, female Doctor, she's going through that post regeneration amnesia thing, but she's always doing the Doctorish thing of finding something odd and poking at it to see what it does.

"There's also that perpetual Doctor Who battle of wanting to capture a given era of the show, to make it feel 'very Nineties' (and 'very Eighties' too, in this case) while also being aware that it's 2016, now, and it's entertainment for now, not some historical artefact.

"There's been a TV show on for 10 years that's dramatically changed the grammar of how Doctor Who stories can be told – I remember writing the script for *Davros* whenever that was – 2003? – and having to fight for flashback scenes, because Doctor Who didn't do flashbacks. I don't think it's possible to write a Doctor Who story now without investing it with some of the energy and spirit of the current TV show. It helps, of course, that the New Adventures were always trying to stretch things and weren't averse to going a bit mad at times."

***COLD FUSION*** features the Doctor with Roz and Chris as his established companions, but the other release, *Original Sin*, features their first meeting and how they joined him in the TARDIS.

Andy Lane's *Original Sin* was published in June 1995, and bringing it to life on audio is John Dorney, who previously adapted the three Gareth Roberts Fourth Doctor novels.

John was a big fan of the novel range in the Nineties.

He explains: "When I went to drama school, I kind of ran out of time to read the New Adventures, so I didn't read them as 'live', as they were released. I came to *Original Sin* a few months later.

"It's an exciting one, with the introduction of Roz and Chris, in a big, epic adventure – it's a huge space opera with some gloriously violent interlude sequences in the novel, in a James Herbert-style.

"The book was huge – it's one of the longer ones, and at one point we were thinking we might have to do it over three discs as a six-parter, but I had a go at it to see what the pace was, and I felt it went at a quite reasonable rate and we went with the two-disc option."

The novel is a lengthy one, but John found some quick ways of reducing the page count.

He says: "What I found quite useful was that I could trim a lot of the random death sequences out, as each would require an actor or voice, but I didn't want to get rid of these sequences all together, as they do provide some of the darker aspects of story. I was able to combine these with something else in the novel, the news transmissions that take place throughout, That way we're able to convey the tone and the rising insanity.

"I went with the same sort of process which I'd used on the Fourth Doctor books. You look for quicker ways to get from A to B.

"*Original Sin* is very strong novel with a lot of story from Andy, and there's not a massive amount of flab that's easily lost, although there were a few scenes which I immediately felt were exciseable. It's just a case of getting through things more quickly.

"In some cases, there were characters on their own quite a lot of the time, and that's difficult to pull off efficiently without them talking to themselves."

John also found he didn't need to do much to bring the new companions to life.

He adds: "For me, they were such strongly defined characters from the word go and Andy did such an amazing job in creating them. There wasn't a massive amount to do because their voices had already been so carefully defined on the page."

**IMMORTAL BELOVED**

In May 2014, Big Finish Productions suffered a devastating blow with the tragic death of Paul Spragg…

**IT'S HARD**to sum up what Paul did for Big Finish in just one job title – he was editor of *Vortex* magazine, working on contracts, script distribution, proof-reading, cover layout, studio management, CD Extra interviews, the website, producer's assistant and a producer in his own right.

In his five years with Big Finish, everyone loved him, with his tireless diligence, his total dedication to his job, his cheery nature, his sense of humour and his kindness and friendship.

Earlier this year, we announced the Paul Spragg Memorial Short Trip Opportunity, giving budding writers a chance to have their work read by executive producer Nicholas Briggs.

**Short Trips** producer Ian Atkins says: "Paul always went out of his way to encourage people who wanted to write for Big Finish, taking the time to respond to the people who'd email our enquiries address either wanting advice, or bursting to share an idea they'd had. Paul somehow managed to tread the delicate line between being positive while not always being able to help, and when he died a lot of the email tributes we got mentioned this.

"When the – horribly – second anniversary loomed this year, an opportunity to write for Big Finish, in his name, seemed natural."

The selected story is written by Josh Wanisko, from New Jersey, with his tale entitled *Forever Fallen*. He says: "I wanted to enter because Big Finish tells the kind of story that I enjoy. I entered with no expectation of being selected, but I knew I would regret not taking the chance. I was happy with the concept, and I think I managed to tell the story as well I could, so I sent it off with no regrets.

"I had the good fortune to hear Tom Baker's Skype address to the (Re)Generation **Who** convention in 2015, and that, as much as anything, helped inform this story.  He said he saw the Doctor as a nice fellow and a source of benevolent silly things, which is not an element of the Doctor's personality that receives as much emphasis in the rebooted television series, but which has always been the most important part of the character for me. I think the story is my way of saying 'I have loved **Doctor Who** ever since I was little kid. This is why I love it, and I want to share this story with people who love it too'."

Summing up his story, Josh teases: "We've all seen movies where the hero begs the villain 'Stop your mad plan before it's too late!'  At the beginning of the story, the villain is ready to deploy his doomsday weapon against an unsuspecting populace, then the Doctor appears."

Ian adds: "We had just over 1000 submissions, and I read them all, filtering down to a short (ish) list of 100. After the deadline, I went through anew, balancing out X working well on this one, Y working well on that, and what I'd be commissioning if a monthly **Short Trips** writer had suggested it.

"And that was what swung it for Josh – it's a great idea. I've watched those **Doctor Who** scenes where the Doctor gives the enemy a chance, and you think, 'Why doesn't anyone take this chance? What would happen to them?'. Josh's opening page showed what he could bring to this idea, plus he surprised me with a late plot development. You always look for that."

*Forever Fallen* will be available for download from December 29, the date of Paul's birthday.

**THE FLIP SIDE**

**THE SIXTH** Doctor and Mrs Constance Clark returned to the fold last month to face *Order of the Daleks*, and their latest trilogy of adventures continue with two tales this month.

Jamie Anderson has written and directed *Absolute Power*, as the time travellers join an archaeological dig in the planet Teymah, where they discover that ancient secrets are best left buried deep beneath its shifting sands.

The second release is *Quicksilver*, by Matt Fitton, which returns Mrs Clarke to Vienna after the war. She has received a telegram informing her that he husband has been lost in action, and the city is not the place for a happy reunion for her.

And talking of reunions, the Doctor will have one of his own, as Flip Jackson is back…

The last time we heard Flip in action in the main range was in *Scavenger*, in March 2014, she was falling to Earth…

Lisa Greenwood is delighted to be back in the character's shoes, as she enthusiastically told *Vortex*:

"They've kept us waiting quite a while, haven't they? To be honest with you, I really didn't know if I was going to come back, so it was really exciting when they told me I was."

Flip first appeared in a Big Finish adventure in *The Crimes of Thomas Brewster* in January 2011, before returning as the Doctor's new companion 12 months later in *The Curse of Davros*.

Lisa continues: "I've had some really lovely comments and a lot of support on Twitter and social media, and it really makes me feel that what I do is worthwhile, so it's really good to know there are people out there who enjoy it so much.

"And it's always good fun!

"I'm very proud of Flip. One of the first jobs I got in my career was on **The Hour** on BBC2, and I did two series of that. But just before I got **The Hour**, I was cast in *The Crimes of Thomas Brewster*. It was a fantastic experience – I can't believe I've been playing her for five years ago now!

"I did a couple of trilogies, so it's great going back for this one. It really is like going back to see the family – it's such a cliche, but it's true. You really do feel like part of a big family."

On bringing back Flip, Matt says: "I talked with script editor Alan Barnes about it, and I knew I would be doing the last story in this trilogy with Constance where we have the reveal about what's happened to her husband.

"I mentioned to him I'd like to put Flip in it somehow, as I thought it would be an interesting relationship to bring to life, with all the differences between Flip and Constance, and Alan said he had been thinking about bringing Flip back anyway!

"I always had an idea that wherever Constance's story would go, there would be a way to get Flip into it.

 "It made sense to me that this resolution should take place around the same period Constance left. We take her back to the 1940s, but we end up a little later than she expects."

**FLIP RETURNS** to the TARDIS to find the Doctor has company with Miranda Raison as Constance, but she's no stranger to meeting his other companions, having encountered the ever-popular Dr Evelyn Smythe, played by the much missed Maggie Stables.

Since we last heard her, Lisa has starred in the film **Capsule** as Charlotte Taylor, the wife of Guy, played by Edmund Kingsley. He is a British fighter pilot in command of Britain's first manned mission to space, but is stuck alone inside a malfunctioning craft.

Lisa explains: "I've been pretty busy. I've managed to do a lot of period dramas. Last year I did *Call The Midwife* as a pregnant lady, which was a bit of a challenge for me! Then I did the film **Capsule**, which is now making its way to America, where I play a character called Lottie.

"I'm really proud of it – you can pick it up in Tesco now, and it's now playing at film festivals in America. I'm really excited about it."

From being married to a space man, Lisa is now back with the ultimate space man in Colin Baker.

"I know!" she laughs. "It's always lovely to see Colin. He's always been very supportive of me, and it was lovely to see him again when I came back through the door. He was the first face I saw.

"And I've now met the lovely Miranda! She was amazing to play off. They are very different, but are very similar in some senses.

"It was really interesting having these two characters, one from the past and one from the modern day, and putting them together as they have very different ideas about how they do things. You're in for some fireworks, at first!

"But it was really good to play against Miranda. Thinking about it, as Flip, I don't think I've had that many scenes where I've had to play against a strong female character, apart from the lovely Maggie Stables. And again we've got some great guest stars, with Joel Fry and Kate Kennedy. It's always a good cast when you come in. I don't know who it is that does the casting, but they always get great people in, and it's always good, friendly, lovely cast."

**MATT FITTON** was delighted to write for Flip, who he feels is very similar to young people today:

He says: "I think she's reckless. Like lots of kids today, she starts with this attitude that she's indestructible.

"They will dive in and try to make the most of everything, even when it all kicks off. She has a certain bravado and wants to experience lots of different things.

"When we followed her journey before, this recklessness came to the fore, and she had such nice interaction with the Doctor – it was a good relationship. He was like a protective uncle or father-figure, while she was having a great time cannoning around the universe, not taking in the full consequences of everything.

"She's got a good fun outlook and is eternally optimistic – she will do it for a thrill."

By having a gung-ho 21st century girl, there are sure to be fireworks when she meets the very proper Mrs Clarke.

Matt agrees: "It's the difference between generations and eras, which makes them like chalk and cheese, and that gives me a lovely dynamic to play with.

"We've not really seen much of Constance in modern day Britain,  although she did go forward in time when we first met her in *The End of the Line*. That was the closest she's been to what is, for us, a modern day setting.

"So it's really very nice to see what happens when someone from 21st century Britain runs into her.

"To Flip, Constance is like someone from ancient history, even though she's only from a period in time her grandad or great-grandad had lived through – just in living memory."

**SO NOW** Flip has returned, will she be with the Doctor for long? Or will Mrs Clarke opt to remain in her own time?

Lisa chuckles: "That's the thing – with **Doctor Who**, you never know what's going to happen. She's a great character and I love playing her. Of course I'd love to come back… who wouldn't?

"Even if I become the next megastar in Hollywood, I would always come back for Big Finish. They've always been so good to me, and I love them."

And Matt adds: "Colin has said that in all his time as the Doctor, he's never had two companions in the TARDIS, so that might be something we can think about."

**NEW MEASURES**

Kenny Smith steps into the Seventies!

**YOU CAN'T** keep a good team down – and Counter-Measures are back with a vengeance this month.

In the last full series of the original **Counter-Measures** series, the regular cast appeared to have been killed off. In July, the first story featuring the return of the group dealt with the mystery of *Who Killed Toby Kinsella?*, acting as a bridge between the original series and the new, to introduce the format of **The New Counter-Measures**.

Sir Toby is alive and well, sitting in his office in the Post Office Tower, overlooking London, while Group Captain Ian Gilmore, Professor Rachel Jenson and Dr Allison Williams travel the globe. Producer David Richardson says: "There was a great feeling making his box set – all the cast and crew felt energised, sure that we had four superb scripts and a really interesting and bold new direction for the series.

"I'm pleased, because I love working on **Counter-Measures** – the lead actors say that coming in to record it is one of the highlights of their year, and I feel the same way. And it seems so does the audience – the series has built up a loyal following.

"So now we're 10 years on, into the 1970s and making a slick technicolour film series, on audio. Toby and his team have a base atop the Post Office Tower, and jet around the globe solving strange threats –  this set alone takes us to Switzerland, the Azores, Monte Carlo and, of course, London. It's exotic and exciting and packed with twists and turns."

**THE ADVENTURE** begins as a series of violent bank robberies are baffling the Swiss police in *Nothing to See Here* by Guy Adams. But as the crime spree escalates and one of the team gets closely involved, are they going in too deep? Can you go undercover even from yourself?

Guy says: "I have Seventies spy-fi baked into me. I'm like a fig roll stuffed with beige slacks and ludicrous facial hair. When I was a kid, bored during school, I drew **The Saint** logo on a piece of paper, adding underneath: **The Saint** A.K.A. Guy Adams. When it was seen by fellow classmates I would certainly have been thrashed senseless if any of them had known what A.K.A. meant. As it was, I was able to run away, mortified, during the confusion.

"I've been a huge fan of the **Counter-Measures** series so to be able to come onboard and play with them in their new decade was great fun."

***TROUBLED WATERS*** by Ian Potter features the team investigating the discovery of  a lost submarine – and what has happened to the crew? Ian says: "There was a line In the series pitch for episode two that said '*Troubled Waters*, Ian Potter. The team encounter trouble in a submarine' so I went from there.

"The first things I decided were that I didn't want to cover similar ground to previous **Doctor Who** and **Torchwood** submarine stories and that I needed to find a very good reason why there wasn't a full crew on my sub that'd require stacks of actors doubling up. Those self-imposed limitations steered me to where we went."

Having written for the first series of **Counter-Measures**, what does the writer perceive as being the differences? He points out: "I took the new format as being about being more action-packed, colourful and international and reflecting the concerns of the 1970s instead of those of the 1960s. But because of my story's setting, it lent itself more to introspection and claustrophobia more than big action sequences. As a result I think my story ends up a bit less pure **New Counter-Measures** than some of the others in the set – like one of those episodes of **The New Avengers** with a lot of little nods back to the 60s **Avengers**, but it's looking forwards as well as backwards I hope."

**THE TEAM** are back on dry land in *The Phoenix Strain* by Christopher Hatherall. After tourists are attacked by the birds circling Parliament Square, Sir Toby suspects London is about to turn into an Alfred Hitchcock movie.

Chris explains: "The focus was on science fiction, specifically science gone wrong through the mistakes of humanity. Fantastical and exciting ideas that also allow room for our characters to engage emotionally with the story.

"Most stories are akin to a puzzle that needs solving, piecing together, and having never written a story in this genre before, this was quite a puzzle to piece together.

"Firstly, John Dorney, who held my hand throughout the process, encouraged me to read a book called *State of Emergency*, by journalist Dominic Sandbrook. This provided some social and cultural background of Britain in the troubled early 1970s and is a fascinating read. It was important to make some reference to the real-life drama that was happening during that time so the book helped hugely. Particularly so when we settled on London as the location for my story.

"The previous episodes of **Counter-Measures** have this pervasive atmosphere set around inventive fantastical ideas. In the best way, these elements reminded me of a 'B movie' style of storytelling so I found a way into that genre and style.

"The idea of a monster came to me. The previous episodes hadn't yet explored an out and out monster story and so I focused on that, eventually settling on the suggestion from the creative team to have birds as the monster antagonist. From there I wanted to turn the everyday birds of London into frightening beasts that terrorise the people and landmarks until our team of heroes saves the day."

**THIS FIRST New Counter-Measures** set concludes in a glamorous location, in *A Gamble With Time* by John Dorney, as they travel to the glamorous casinos of Monte Carlo, and meet Lady Suzanne Clare.

John says: "We had discussions about what we wanted to do in the box sets, and we felt it should have an international thing, so it would feel like an ITC series. I wanted to replicate that – you get a big sequence on location for the pre-credits scene and then for the first one after that, they're in Elstree pretending they are somewhere glamorous!

"I went for Monte Carlo as a location as it does have that kind of opulence and glamour to it, as well as that kind of 70sness I wanted – it feels like an episode of **The Persuaders!**, which is my favourite show of the era. Monte Carlo and the 70s felt interlinked, to me.

"I had an initial idea to run with, which I came up with for a **Sapphire and Steel**, but it didn't work, so I've reworked it and riffed on it here."

And then there's Lady Suzanne...John reveals: "I wrote a part specifically for Caroline Seymour, to give her a good, strong meaty role. From her first scene, it's pretty obvious the villain of the piece is her – she's most definitely the bad guy. There's several influences on her – Hugh Lawrie's character in **The Night Manager**, there's elements based on Caroline herself, and my mum! It all came together in this thoroughly unpleasant individual. Lady Suzanne Clare's an international arms dealer, specialising in alien technology.

"As soon as I heard Carolyn in her first scene, I just thought, 'Oh, she's brilliant,' and that was just the pre-titles. She never looks back from there."

 Carolyn adds: "She was THE most delicious glamorous arms dealer in the world! I adore playing the bad ones, the trick is finding something in them that might be considered 'likeable'. No weak spots in her though, and trickier without a camera, but she has a weakness, but it's my little secret. Discerning listeners will hear it!

"I absolutely loved playing her, and the rest of the cast are stunning. The level of talent that Big Finish works with is so high, that I am a little bit awed to be considered in their league, and they keep getting better, which conversely means...! I love doing these shows."

**LISTEN AGAIN: BLAKE’S 7**

**COLD FURY**

**IT'S DECEMBER**. Chances are, there's going to be a snowfall very soon. That's what happens when it gets cold.

This month we turn back the clock to May 2014, when **Blake's 7** adventure *Cold Fury* was released. Set during Series B, the *Liberator* crew discovered goings on, on the ice world Horst Minor. It was written by Big Finish veterans Mark Wright and Cavan Scott.

Mark says: "We were asked to tie up the first season of full cast audios in an epic two-part finale (culminating in *Caged*). There was a bit of a shopping list for this one – bring the President in (although he appeared briefly in the previous story), have Vila sell the crew of the Liberator out (and only have Michael Keating in three scenes due to cast logistics), a cameo from Gustav Nyron. Oh, and make it exciting."

Cavan adds: "I remember we came up with a story set in a space ship graveyard, but it just wasn't working, so the action switched to an ice-covered planet."

*Cold Fury* really sticks in the mind as it has a very 'visual' audio landscape. Cav says: "At that time I think that's what we were known for as a writing partnership. We thought of these as movies with no pictures. And of course, a snowy, icy landscape lends itself to soundscapes."

Mark agrees: "We always try to visualise how it would have looked back in the 70s, so when writing, it's fun to think all of the Horst scenes would have been recorded on location on film, with some stock BBC snowstorm sound FX and an overlay of snow on the film as Gareth Thomas and co had polystyrene snow blown in their faces. And contrast that with Avon back up on the Liberator, in studio at TV Centre on videotape.

"Doing that helps to get the feel of it all in your head as you're writing. That really helped with the planet-set scenes for me. Those Horst scenes make me feel really cold when listening back to them."

*Cold Fury* also featured Travis, with Brian Croucher back in the role. Cav enjoyed writing for him, saying: "I loved it! He's such a great bully-boy of a villain by this point."

Mark concurs: "I think we both had great fun writing for Travis. He's really good for moving plots along as he's so reactive to everything. A big blunt instrument of a villain, charging his way through a script. It was nice to write this version of Travis as being in more control than usual.

"He thinks he's back at the top table and it gives him a bit of a swagger, which Brian is so good at playing. I love how he delivers the last line of the story with such relish and gusto. 'You've lost, Blake!' That had been a long time coming. Probably my favourite bit of the episode."

Mark looks on it: "With great affection, and also for the studio recording day. It isn't every day you're in a studio with Gareth Thomas – who is so missed – Paul Darrow, Jan Chappell, Michael Keating, Sally Knyvette, Brian Croucher. That's my childhood, right there. And we also had Caroline Langrishe and Hugh Fraser along for the ride. It's a privilege to hear your words being said by such a talented group of actors, and is always one of the great joys of Big Finish."

**VORTEX MAIL**

OLD FRIENDS

I'm a huge fan of your **Doctor Who** ranges. I was wondering if you were planning to make audios with Samson and Gemma from *Terror Firma* or Sally Morgan and Lyssandra from *Black and White*?

Julien Lahaye

**Nick**: They're all great characters, but we currently have no plans to bring them back.

COMIC CAPERS

Listening back through older releases over the past few weeks, I took some time to work through **2000AD** and was reminded how lovely that range was. What is the likelihood of some of the out of print releases being made available again at some point as downloads and is there any desire to revive the range? I would also like to petition for some **Doctor Who** stories to be set in Canada. I don't think any **Doctor Who** adventure from Big Finish has taken place in the Great White North and we are feeling a little left out.

**Colin Archer  
Nick**: The sad thing is that the **2000AD** range never really sold well enough to continue it. It's a particular shame for me, because I thought those two **Strontium Dog** releases were among the best productions Big Finish has ever done. As for **Doctor Who** stories set in Canada… How about a historical set around the assault on Quebec? Or too contentious still?

FANTASTIC FRIENDS

Once again I'm emailing to sing the praises of John Dorney. This evening I spent two hours almost driving to Liverpool Airport and being stuck in the most incredibly appalling set of roadworks/traffic jam only to give up and go home. Thankfully I was equipped with **Doom Coalition 3** and *Maker of Demon*s. Loved *Maker* but *Absent Friends* was incredible. A spectacular story. It's not often I become so emotionally involved with a story but – spoilers! – the second conversation between Liv and her dad was simply wonderful. I joked with Mr Dorney on Twitter that he was either a genius or has an infinite number of monkeys working for him. He is clearly a genius. To take me from, "Oh, I wonder who's responsible," to shouting "AUTONS, AUTONS, AUTONS!" all the way to having a lump in my throat and forgetting to close the gap in the traffic.   
**Richard Jackson**

**Nick**: We all thoroughly agree with you, Richard. John Dorney is a great writer and a lovely fellow to boot. Not that we ever boot him. Honest.

CREATING CHRONICLES

Has anyone ever approached you with the suggestion of doing a Big Finish version of the original *Dragonlance Chronicles* series? I believe, as good as Big Finish is, that you can do for the original *Dragonlance* series what Peter Jackson did for *Lord of the Rings*! Please, please, please consider tackling this series.

Neal Frost

**Nick**: I can honestly say we've never considered that. Apologies for disappointing you, Neal.

CHAMBER PIECE

I just finished listening to the fantastic **Philip Hinchcliffe Presents – *The Genesis Chamber***. What a fantastic story it was! Philip still knows how to create classic **Doctor Who**. Tom and Louise were on great form and the guest cast was brilliant. What an epic it was! Thank you for releasing this marvellous story. Credit also to Anthony Lamb's gorgeous cover design. Any chance of repackaging the first two stories in the new design as Big Finish did with some of the **Bernice Summerfield** range a few years ago. I like my CDs to match? Three quick questions: Why are there no Fourth Doctor stories in the **Classic Doctors, New Monsters** range? I'm a big fan of producer, presenter and writer John Lloyd – now you have Tom and Lalla together will we get to hear his lost story *The Doomsday Contract* one day? Can we can an adaption of Chris Boucher's BBC novel *Corpse Marker*?

Sarah Stephens

**Nick**: No plans for Corpse Marker and Doomsday Contract. Fourth Doctor just confirmed in **New Monsters** – against the Vashta Nerada! It isn't likely we'll repackage, I'm sorry to say. Glad you're loving the Hinchcliffe range, though.

**RELEASE SCHEDULE**

DOCTOR WHO: ABSOLUTE POWER (219, SIXTH DOCTOR AND CONSTANCE)

DOCTOR WHO: QUICKSILVER (220, SIXTH DOCTOR, CONSTANCE AND FLIP)

THE NEW COUNTER-MEASURES: SERIES 1

DOCTOR WHO: SHORT TRIPS: THE HESITATION DEVIATION (6.12, SEVENTH DOCTOR, BERNICE SUMMERFIELD, DOWNLOAD ONLY)

DOCTOR WHO – SHORT TRIPS: FOREVER FALLEN (6.X, SEVENTH DOCTOR, ACE, DOWNLOAD ONLY)

DOCTOR WHO – THE NOVEL ADAPTATIONS: ORIGINAL SIN (SEVENTH DOCTOR, ROZ, CHRIS)

DOCTOR WHO – THE NOVEL ADAPTATIONS: COLD FUSION (FIFTH DOCTOR, ADRIC, TEGAN, NYSSA, SEVEN DOCTOR, ROZ AND CHRIS)

DOCTOR WHO: THE EARLY ADVENTURES: THE SONTARANS (3.4, FIRST DOCTOR, STEVEN, SARA)

DARK SHADOWS: HAUNTING MEMORIES

DAN DARE: THE AUDIO ADVENTURES: VOLUME ONE (BOX SET)

DOCTOR WHO: THE STAR MEN (221, FIFTH DOCTOR, ADRIC, TEGAN AND NYSSA)

DOCTOR WHO – FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: THE BEAST OF KRAVENOS (6.1 FOURTH DOCTOR, ROMANA II, K9, JAGO & LITEFOOT)

DOCTOR WHO: SHORT TRIPS: THE WORLD BEYOND THE TREES (7.01, EIGHTH DOCTOR AND  LIV CHENKA, DOWNLOAD ONLY)

DOCTOR WHO – THE DIARY OF RIVER SONG: SERIES 02 (BOX SET, RIVER SONG, SIXTH DOCTOR, SEVENTH DOCTOR)

TORCHWOOD ONE: BEFORE THE FALL (BOX SET, IANTO, YVONNE)

GRACELESS: SERIES 4 (BOX SET)

THE AVENGERS – THE LOST EPISODES: VOLUME 07 (BOX SET)

PATHFINDER LEGENDS: EDGE OF ANARCHY  – CURSE OF THE CRIMSON THRONE (3.1)

DOCTOR WHO: THE CONTINGENCY CLUB (222, FIFTH DOCTOR, ADRIC, TEGAN AND NYSSA)

DOCTOR WHO – FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: THE ETERNAL BATTLE (6.2 FOURTH DOCTOR, ROMANA II AND K9)

DOCTOR WHO – NEW SERIES: THE WAR DOCTOR VOLUME 4 (4. WAR DOCTOR, LEELA)

DOCTOR WHO: SHORT TRIPS: GARDENERS' WORLDS (7.02, THE THIRD DOCTOR AND JO GRANT, DOWNLOAD ONLY)

PATHFINDER LEGENDS: EDGE OF ANARCHY  – SEVEN DAYS TO THE GRAVE  (3.2)

DOCTOR WHO: ZALTYS (223, FIFTH DOCTOR, ADRIC, TEGAN AND NYSSA)

DOCTOR WHO – FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: THE SILENT SCREAM (6.3 FOURTH DOCTOR, ROMANA II AND K9)

DOCTOR WHO: SHORT TRIPS: HOW TO WIN PLANETS AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE (7.03, THE FOURTH DOCTOR, SARAH, HARRY AND THE MONK, DOWNLOAD ONLY)

DOCTOR WHO: DOOM COALITION 4

CHARLOTTE POLLARD: SERIES 02 (BOX SET)

TORCHWOOD: VISITING HOURS (13, TBA)

THE OMEGA FACTOR: SERIES 2

PATHFINDER LEGENDS: EDGE OF ANARCHY  – ESCAPE FROM OLD KORVOSA  (3.3)

DOCTOR WHO – SPECIAL RELEASES: SPARE PARTS (LIMITED VINYL EDITION) (FIFTH DOCTOR AND NYSSA)

DOCTOR WHO –PHILIP HINCHCLIFFE PRESENTS: THE HELM OF AWE

DOCTOR WHO – SHORT TRIPS: FLASHPOINT (7.04, THE EIGHTH DOCTOR, LUCIE MILLER, DOWNLOAD ONLY)

DOCTOR WHO – MAIN RANGE: TBA  (224, TBA)

DOCTOR WHO – FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: DETHRAS (6.4, FOURTH DOCTOR AND ROMANA II)

JAGO & LITEFOOT: SERIES 13 (BOX SET)

TORCHWOOD: THE DOLLHOUSE (14, TBA)

DAN DARE: THE AUDIO ADVENTURES: VOLUME TWO (BOX SET)

PATHFINDER LEGENDS: EDGE OF ANARCHY  A HISTORY OF ASHES (3.4)

DOCTOR WHO – SHORT TRIPS: FALLING (7.05, THE FIRST DOCTOR, POLLY, BEN, DOWNLOAD ONLY)

DOCTOR WHO – MAIN RANGE: TBA  (225, TBA)

DOCTOR WHO – FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: THE HAUNTING OF MALKIN PLACE (6.5, FOURTH DOCTOR AND ROMANA II)

UNIT – THE NEW SERIES: ASSEMBLED (BOX SET 4, KATE STEWART AND OSGOOD)

TORCHWOOD: TBA (15, TBA)

PATHFINDER LEGENDS: EDGE OF ANARCHY  – SKELETONS OF SCARWALL (3.5)

DARK SHADOWS: PHANTOM MEMORIES

DOCTOR WHO – SHORT TRIPS: TBA (7.06, TBA)

DOCTOR WHO – THE COMPANION CHRONICLES: THE FIRST DOCTOR VOLUME 2  (11.0, TBA)

DOCTOR WHO – MAIN RANGE: TBA  (226, TBA)

DOCTOR WHO – FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: SUBTERRANEA (6.6, FOURTH DOCTOR AND ROMANA II)

SURVIVORS – SERIES 6: BOX SET

THE LIVES OF CAPTAIN JACK

TORCHWOOD: TBA (16, TBA)

PATHFINDER LEGENDS: EDGE OF ANARCHY  CROWN OF FANGS (3.6)

DOCTOR WHO – CLASSIC DOCTORS NEW MONSTERS: VOLUME TWO (BOX SET)  
DOCTOR WHO – SHORT TRIPS: TBA (7.07, TBA)  
DOCTOR WHO – MAIN RANGE: TBA  (227, TBA) N DOCTOR WHO – FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: THE MOVELLAN GRAVE (6.7, FOURTH DOCTOR AND ROMANA II)

DOCTOR WHO – THE THIRD DOCTOR ADVENTURES: VOLUME 3  (TBA)

TORCHWOOD: TBA  (17, TBA)

DARK SHADOWS: DREAMS OF LONG AGO

DOCTOR WHO – MAIN RANGE: TBA  (228, TBA)

DOCTOR WHO – FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: THE SKIN OF THE SLEEK (6.8, FOURTH DOCTOR AND ROMANA II)

DOCTOR WHO – SHORT TRIPS: TBA (7.08, TBA)

TORCHWOOD: TBA  (18, TBA)

THE PRISONER: VOLUME TWO (BOX SET)

DOCTOR WHO – MAIN RANGE: TBA  (229, TBA)

DOCTOR WHO – MAIN RANGE: TBA  (230, TBA)

DOCTOR WHO – FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES:  THE THIEF WHO STOLE TIME (6.9, FOURTH DOCTOR AND ROMANA II)

DOCTOR WHO – SHORT TRIPS: TBA (7.09, TBA)

DOCTOR WHO - THE EARLY ADVENTURES: TBA (4.1, TBA)